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ABSTRACT

A study of some features of the language usage of nonnative English speakers focused on global communicative competence and the use of text-building devices. Subjects were the primary-school-age children of eight native Italian-, Greek-, and Macedonian-speaking migrant parents and a matched set of native-English-speaking classmates. The language corpus consisted of verbally elicited completions of several narratives. The native English-speaking children's (ES) texts were compared with the nonnative English speakers' (NES) texts for the identification of or reference to characters in the context of discourse cohesiveness. It was found that in telling stories, the language usage of the two groups was similar in many respects but different in detail, with greater NES use of the nominal referential form, suggesting a greater hearer orientation. NES subjects also introduced more characters, effected character changes more frequently, and used the connective "and" more often. ES subjects used more pronominal reference and showed a greater sense for contemporary adolescent usage in Australia. The results suggest that: bilingual children need more help in learning standard morphosyntactical forms and attaching appropriate meanings to lexical items; monolingual children should have greater exposure to second languages; and Australian education should not be based on a monolingual perspective. (MSE)

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MIGRANT CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE, PARENTAL AND PEER LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS IN THE AUSTRALIAN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXT

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INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on part of an ongoing research project concerned with the language development and language environment of children with a non-English speaking background (NES). There are various reasons for undertaking such a study and many factors that can be investigated.

At present the project is exploring some features of the speech of NES children and their parents. The focus is their global communicative competence and use of text-building devices. By comparing the language competence and use of NES children and of children with an English speaking background (ES), it can be established whether there is a difference or not. This has implications for learning in class, as teaching usually builds on the language of the dominant ES population. If the NES and ES children's language is the same, the school system can carry on complacently in the way it has operated before and need not concern itself with the language use in the home. If, however, there is a difference and the nature of this difference can be documented, the schools have valuable data for developing appropriate programs and well founded arguments can be marshalled for or against language maintenance in the home and teaching languages other than English in schools.

Further, such an investigation should yield information on various aspects of primary school children's language use which could generally inform the language programs of schools and have relevance for the education of all children.

Previous Analyses

The two analyses which have been carried out on the data from the study, Parental and Peer Environments of Migrant Children's Language, are entitled (a) Text Building Devices in Intercultural Conversations (1985) and (b) The Language of Migrant Parents and Their Children: An Inter-language Perspective (1985). Brief summaries of the analyses will be given prior to a consideration of the third analysis of the data which is the subject of this paper.

(a) It is through parental conversation that children are first introduced and continue to be exposed to the cohesive properties of language which play an important part in the understanding and writing of narrative and expository prose. In English, the numerous cohesive devices include pronoun and demonstrative reference, and ellipsis. These are the devices selected for observation in the conversations of eight migrant parents, their primary-school age children and their contemporaries referred to as '(class) mates', matched for language, teacher assessed ability and sex. The text for analysis was produced in interviews with the respondents conducted by the same interviewer about their attitudes to schooling, bilingualism, the use of languages other than English in and outside the home, socio-cultural identity and multiculturalism in Australia. The languages of the NES respondents were Italian, Greek and Macedonian.

Since the focus of this study was on the use of selected cohesive devices in verbal interaction, only the first utterance of an adjacency pair was considered for the analysis. Adjacency pairs are verbal sequences produced by two speakers immediately following each other.

Forty answers were considered, 20 to yes-no and 20 to wh- questions received by each individual giving a total of 320 answers to be analysed.

The text that provided the material for the analysis was the first utterance of the second part of an adjacency pair. A study of these led to the identification of the following answer types

* Formulaic answers
* Fragments
* Ellipted sentences
* Complete or non-ellipted sentences
* Alternative answers
* Main and subordinate clauses and complex sentences where the question was to be understood as the ellipted preceding clause
* Ellipted clauses and fragment clauses where the question was to be understood as the ellipted preceding clause
* Unclassifiable answers e.g. false starts.

The most frequently used answer type was the unelaborated formulaic answer namely 'yes', 'no' and/or routine answers which were not continued and fragments. On the whole, children were closer in frequency of use to mates than to parents. Fragment answers for all groups were elicited more by yes-no questions.

Wh- questions elicited comparatively more ellipted answers from children rather than parents compared with such responses to yes-no questions. Mates were more similar in this regard than parents. Parents, children and mates overwhelmingly answered yes-no questions with 'yes'

compared with wh- questions. The same can be said for the use of 'no' in answer to yes-no questions.

Formulaic or 'yes', 'no' and routine answers are of interest because they make total ellipsis, namely the non-realisation of the whole of a proposition, possible. Their appropriate use requires the comprehension of the question and familiarity with the English yes-no answering system which vacillates between a positive-negative and agreement-disagreement system with a tendency towards the former. Formulaic answers that are not continued do not involve productive language skills. Their role in conversational text building is minimal.

It was striking that examination of the adjacency pairs revealed a low frequency of use of the cohesive devices of pronoun and demonstrative reference. The use of demonstrative reference was sporadic across the groups and sexes. Pronoun reference was present in only approximately ten percent of answers. The differences among the three groups and sexes was not great. Perhaps these text building devices are more difficult to use because the speakers have to match their antecedents in number and in some cases in gender. This requires accurate identification and the productive application of the information so obtained.

In sum, the interlanguage speaking parents, their children and mates made ample use of ellipsis, thereby tying their answers to the preceding question. This is the way they made their replies cohesive, and not by using pronoun or demonstrative reference. The groups differed in their ability to produce morphosyntactically and pragmatically well-formed replies, the parents being less competent in this respect than the mates,

with the children occupying an intermediate position. With respect to the frequency with which the different answer types was handled, the children alternated between an intermediate position and a position closer to mates. There is then a likelihood of a weak parental influence in the cohesiveness of children's speech in dyadic exchanges which deserves further investigation.

(b) Children acquiring a first or second language need language exposure which is both cognitively and linguistically informative. In a monolingual family, the parents provide such a language environment by virtue of being mother tongue speakers of the language used in the home. In bilingual families in Australia, namely families with a NES background, where the parents are not fully proficient second language learners of English, they will by necessity use an 'interlanguage' form of English. Such a language displays grammatically and lexically deviant features based on the learner's particular rule system which can differ in idiosyncratic ways from the rule system of the native speaker.

According to Faerch and Kasper (1983: 52-53), interlanguage is based on three types of strategies. The first strategy simplifies language phonologically and/or morphosyntactically. The second simplifies language at the discourse level and may affect the choice and range of speech acts and their style and the propositional content of utterances so that speakers avoid or abandon topics and/or replace meanings. The third is a creative process, using all available language resources. This strategy is at the root of code switching, interlingual transfer, over-generalisation, paraphrase, word coinage, restructuring/repetition/false starts and the cooperative move of asking for clarification.

All strategies and their various manifestations were observed in the speech of the parents participating in this study, but the range of manifestions varied from individual to individual.

The data for this analysis were gathered in the same way as was described for the previous analysis using the same interview and groups. The texts selected for analysis were 50 clauses uttered by parents and 25 clauses uttered by children and mates respectively. In total, 800 clauses were analysed from the point of view of morphosyntactic and pragmatic appropriateness. Special attention was paid to the verb group (VG) including the negative (NEG), to plural marking (PL), to pronoun reference (he, she, it, him, her, they, them) and demonstrative reference (the, this, that, there, those), to lexical transfer and confusion in word meaning. Clauses were categorised according to: fragments, ellipted sentences, complete sentences and not classified.

The global assessment of the parents', children's and mates' communicative competence showed an error rate of 58 percent for the parents, 37 percent for the children and 7 percent for the mates. In other words, over half of parents' clauses were faulty, compared with one third of children's and less than one tenth of mates. In global error rate, the children were closer to parents than to mates.

The speech of all parents was characterised by some interlanguage features. The error rate varied from 28 to 78 percent. All of the children were addressed in English by their parents some of the time, so they were exposed to interlanguage in the home. Language use was not necessarily reciprocal in that when the parents used the ethnic language,

the children often answered in English. Compared with the parents, the variation in error rate was much less among the children (20 percent to 40 percent). No pattern of association could be detected between density of errors in parents' and children's speech. It seems that the fact of exposure to interlanguage is more important than the density of errors in parents' speech.

Examples of errors included the following. Parents had more problems with the Verb Group than children and mates such as faulty present tense forms. While respondents used plural nouns rarely in their utterances,parents and mates used them more than children. With prepositions, parents had a markedly higher error rate than children or mates. Pronoun reference was used much more by mates than children and parents. Parents had difficulty with demonstrative reference in comparison with children and mates. Meaning replacement (through wrong choice of words) was found only sporadically in the clauses uttered by children and mates but was observable fairly frequently in the speech of parents.

In sum, the major problem areas for the parents were the third person singular morpheme, the copula, the overgeneralisation of the present tense to the past and the negative construction. The past tense was used more by children than parents or mates. Pronoun and demonstrative reference were rarely used.

As to the children, it seems they don't follow the language use pattern of parents in detail. What does happen is that they make more morphosyntactic and pragmatic errors than their mates.

The Study Texts

We have seen what some of the characteristics of the children's English were in an interview situation with an adult when talking about themselves, and voicing opinions on everyday matters. But in addition to interviews, oral descriptions and narratives were also collected for the study of text building devices. Here the audience was mainly the matched peer who was asked to participate in various ways playing different kinds of listener roles. It was thought that in the company of peers the children would talk easily and naturally reflecting more closely their own language competence (cf Labov, 1969).

The taping of descriptions and stories took place at the children's school after the interviews had been completed. By this time they were familiar with the interviewer and appeared relaxed in the company of a friend. The NES children did all the speaking first, then the ES children took their turn.

The descriptions were based on pictorial material and do not concern us here. In contrast, the narratives were elicited verbally. The children were asked to talk about four different events. The first event involved the completion of a story told in the first person, one concerning the unexpected appearance of a stranger in the home, the other a hold-up in a milkbar. The length of the stimulus texts was approximately 40 words. These were read out aloud by the speaker who was asked to finish the story. Then the hearer was invited to comment whether s/he would have completed the story in the same way. The second and third events concerned an accident: one that the child had been involved in or seen, this was referred to as a 'real' accident, and another that the

child had made up. The partner was to judge which was the real and which the made up story. The children tried hard to trick each other in making both accidents sound real. In this they often succeeded. The majority of the stories were car accidents. In this study, they were treated as part of the total text but at a later date the two accident narratives by the same speaker could be compared to see whether previous practice makes a difference with regard to certain discourse features. The fourth event was a television serial or show familiar to both children. The narrator was asked to describe a recent episode and the partner to indicate afterwards whether any important details were left out. Indeed, partners often added some details demonstrating that they were attentive listeners.

The children seemed interested in these story telling exercises and on several occasions made favourable comments implying that they would have liked to continue with the sessions. It must be stressed that the children's classrooms offered a congenial environment so that the taping sessions were not simply an escape from lessons.

Method

This paper deals with the sum total of the narrative texts for each of the 16 children. At a later date when the narratives of the total group (44 children) from which the present 16 have been extracted, have been transcribed and analysed, the different types of narratives will be compared and discussed separately.

According to the research design adopted, this discussion should be based on 64 different narratives. In fact there are only 62 because one NES child was unable to invent an accident and one ES child could not

remember a television show. Care was taken to ensure that comparisons among the children were based on the quality of their talk while controlling for the quantity. This was achieved by determining for each variable of interest the percent of clauses in which the variable was observed. These percentages were then averaged, providing a mean percent figure for the eight members of each group.

Oral narratives are of interest because they usually represent speech sustained for a longer period than is the case when answering questions in an interview situation. Narratives are part of everyday language use. We constantly relate daily events to the people around us and teachers include them in their teaching strategies. The telling of stories should therefore be familiar to children and reveal much about their language. Wald (198 : 104) aptly describes narratives from the point of view of the linguistic researcher as "discourse units that are extended, potentially syntactically elaborate, commonly spoken and easy to elicit".

In a narrative the opening scene is set or understood, the characters and objects are introduced and events are described, as the narrative unfolds and shifts from scene to scene (Du Bois, 1980: 203). Such a text offers many possibilities for study. These include the structure of the narrative (Labov, 1967; Rumelhart, 1975), the influence of the larger cultural context on the expression of events and evaluations (Tannen, 1980), and the cohesive devices used and the verbalisation of characters and objects within the discourse (Du Bois, 1980).

This paper is concerned with the latter, namely the use of some cohesive devices, but more importantly with the verbalisation of

characters in the children's stories. The treatment of this topic was influenced, but is not identical with, the approach adopted by the 'Pear Stories' Studies (Chafe, 1980).

As mentioned earlier these narrative tasks were of three different types. First, the children finished someone else's story begun in the first person and mostly continued in the first person making the use of the pronoun 'I' mandatory. Second, the children related an event experienced or witnessed. Third, they recounted an imagined event and finally, they described a television show or film involving several characters. Because of the nature of the narratives, the stories centred around characters. This suggested observing how the children handled the entity referencing system. In addition their interclausal use of connectives was also looked at. Of course, these topics deal with only a small fraction of the cohesive devices in English which play such an important role in constructing a text. (For details on cohesion in English, see Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

The Tracing of Identity

For the purposes of this analysis an identity was considered a character if it represented a person, a nonhuman or animate being (e.g. a dog) or an object controlled by a person and so substituting for a person (e.g. a car). Characters had to be introduced and their identity maintained throughout the narrative. As Du Bois (1980: 204) points out, the continuity of a real person or object "itself runs as a continuous thread in the real world", but in discourse the continuity can be

expressed only intermittently, through phrases which appear at intervals in the narrative. The nominal verbalisation of these characters or entities can take three forms. They can be expressed through a noun phrase, a pronoun or ellipted; the following is a summary of the forms selected for study when in subject position in the clause.

a/n) some, 0 (+ properties) X

the, this, that, there, those (+ properties) X

I, he, she, it, they

0 (ellipsis)

(Based on Brown and Yule, 1983: 185)

These referencing items vary in their definiteness and the degree of their explicitness. Each mention of a character demands a choice from among several options. The choice is based on the principle of 'givenness'. Givenness is not a permanent attribute of an entity. It is an attribute the speaker momentarily assigns to the entity because s/he believes that the hearer knows who is being talked about. This belief is based on speaker assessment of the sources of information available to the hearer which include his general knowledge of the world, the content of the previous stretch of narrative, with its implications and the evocation of frames or scripts or schemata, the context of the situation and so forth. (For a recent discussion of identity referencing, see Brown and Yule, 1983). For effective communication to take place, the hearer must bring the reference entities into the focus of the hearer's consciousness (Chafe, 1980). The difference between memory and consciousness is that of degree, namely the extent to which knowledge is activated (Bernardo, 1980). Because activated knowledge is volatile, that is, subject to fading and displacement, the speaker must constantly monitor the state of the hearer's

consciousness. What cannot be assumed to be in focus must be treated as new information even if it has been mentioned before. In English, the indefinite article in the case of singular and 'some' or no article in the case of plural nouns and recently 'this' and 'these' indicate that a 'new' character, in other words a character not in focus, has been introduced. As nominals are the most informative or explicit forms available in the referencing system, one would expect an indefinite noun at the first mention of an entity rather than the attenuated pronoun which is minimally informative as it only indicates number, and in its singular form, sex. One would not expect the completely uninformative ellipsis. But as the entity's status of 'givenness' and 'newness' are not solely based on previous explicit mention in a text, speakers have a much greater freedom of choice among the reference systems than might appear. Du Bois (1980: 220-21) suggests that introducing a new entity is like opening a new 'file', the hearer must be provided with adequate information about the nature of the file. But on the basis of Grice's (1975) Co-operative Principles, there is no need to be over-informative, that is to provide information that the hearer can infer from the text, the situation, his or her knowledge of the world and of the specific topic, namely information furnished by topic frames. It is therefore not surprising that 'new files' can be opened by definite nouns or even pronouns. This is so not only because they may be inferrable but also because the speaker may subsequently give further information. Thus:

NES child: The front passenger died. It was a little boy.

The task of story telling can be a complex one, not only because the identity of entities and the sequence of events must be made clear, but also because viewpoints have to be chosen and maintained. The choice is

between describing events as an omniscient external narrator would see them, or as one of the characters of the story (Polanyi, 1982: 155). In other words, one can tell a story from the 'outside', adopting real world perspectives or from the 'inside', telling the story directly. If these perspectives are merged, a device often used to highlight the climactic moment in a story, the hearer might get confused and so be uncertain as to the identity of the referent.

When talking about a television show the children sometimes switched perspectives, that is, sometimes they took it for granted that their audience knew about the persons involved even if they were newly introduced to the plot. Consequently they did not identify them with indefinite specific reference. At other points in their narrative, they treated newly introduced characters as unknown entities, that is as new information, and specified them accordingly.

Extra-textual or exophoric shared knowledge: a film viewer's perspective.

NES child: There is this mouse and the cat is trying to eat it. (In Walt Disney films, the mouse and the cat are the main characters).

Alternating between 'real' world and 'story' world perspective.

NES child: Genie's master goes to an island because he is in space flight. And he drops on the island. And he opens this bottle. And he finds a genie, and the genie says "I wish anything you want". And he doesn't want any wishes. And then but she goes when he's when they found where he went, they, they went with the helicopter. He was back in all these things and went into the helicopter.

In discussing how identities are introduced and traced in a narrative, it is useful to make a distinction between the terms 'phoric' and 'referential' (Du Bois, 1980: 226). The mention of a new entity is referential, but may not be phoric and therefore cohesive if the identity is not recoverable from the text. Antecedents of phoric reference must be part of the text.

Phoric reference followed by non-phoric reference.

ES child: After that Wally has just done it. He just kept on. And another man walked out.

This study is not restricted to phoric referencing. It includes generic mentions which may take almost any form. A frequently occurring one is generic 'they' (Du Bois, 1980: 224-25), as in the following example:

ES child: Then more injured people came in. So they had to operate on people and all that.

Phoric referencing items and their antecedents do not always match formally. A plural noun phrase or pronoun may be used to refer back to several entities presented singly in the narrative or vice versa. As Halliday and Hasan observe, this follows from "the general nature of anaphoric reference items, that they refer to the meaning and not to the forms that have gone before" (1976: 62). Such forms were counted as having legitimate antecedents.

Plural reference to singular antecedents.

ES child: Cindy and Bobby lost they were, they got lost and they were lost by chasing this little Indian boy.

NES child: She and Sammy saw it, a hot air balloon. So they hopped in that.

To sum up, identification of a referencing item is hearer-oriented. The speaker knows the referent and so does not need to express it to himself/herself. What the speaker has to do is not only assess the range and distribution of referential forms which a listener can process, but also whether identity can be accessed directly or indirectly, that is, through the text or otherwise. The children were fairly skilled in this, with a likely mean percent error rate of only one percent for both groups. So there were sporadic passages where it was impossible to tell whom they were talking about even if one were familiar with the plot and characters, e.g. those of a television serial.

Confused referencing:

NES child: I was walking at home with my friend and there was a kind of a boy, he... this boy, hair on the back, and that boy got the swing, and instead of him he bit me right in the ankle.

ES child: They lived in a flat and a new person came in, so there were two to tidy up and all that. When Arnold was bouncing in this hall, he - the boy - the son - the man's son was there and said: "Ah caught you, bouncing him, the thing'o". Then he was saying: "Caught you, Grant". And then he went back inside and told his dad. No, and the boy took him, the boy, and went back. No, the man, the new man brought it back up to him.

DISCUSSION

In a discussion concerning the introduction and maintenance of identities in a narrative text, it is reasonable to first look at the length of the stories collected. This was measured in numbers of clauses. According to this method of assessment, the NES and ES children were fairly similar in talkativeness. (Refer to Table 1). The NES contributed somewhat fewer

clauses (43 less) than the ES children. One of the former uttered the fewest (14) and one of the latter the most (91) clauses. So although the size of the corpus collected from the two groups of speakers is reasonably close, it varies considerably between individuals within each group.

Table 1: Length of Text: Number of Clauses

Number of clauses	f	%	Mean percent
Total group	873	100	55
. NES	415	47	52
.. ES	458	53	57

. NES = children with a non-English-speaking background.
.. ES = children with an English-speaking background.

The majority of clauses contained an animate entity in subject position which was the target of this study. The proportion was almost identical for both groups (Refer to Table 2). This meets expectations as the narratives were person-centred.

Table 2: Subject Referencing Relative to Clauses

	Clause n	Total Reference mean percent	Noun Phrase mean percent	Pronoun mean percent	Ellipsis mean percent
Total Group	873	84	26	48	13
NES	415	85	30	44	15
ES	458	84	23	40	16

If one looks in Table 3 at the distribution of nominal, pronominal and ellipted references within the total referencing category one finds that pronoun reference was used most by both groups. More than half of the references were of this attenuated type with a slightly higher percent for the ES children. If one adds the other attenuated category, namely ellipsis, it appears that two-thirds of the referential forms belonged to the

attenuated group and so carried little or no specific information. The ranking order in frequency for both groups was pronoun (P), noun phrase (N), ellipsis (E). The latter being used significantly less than the other two.

Table 3: Reference Types within the Subject Reference Category

	Total References	Noun Phrase		Pronoun		Ellipsis	
	n	f	%	f	%	f	%
Total group	723	197	22	435	60	91	13
NES	341	102	30	195	57	44	13
ES	382	95	25	140	63	47	12

The dominance of pronoun referencing can be explained by the reduced need for specificity and explicitness because of the array of sources contributing to the identification of entities and because of the possible switching of perspectives. Clancy (1980) draws our attention to the fact that inexplicit reference is often used for the central character or 'hero' reflecting the narrator's focus of attention.

Clancy believes (1980: 179-80) that the narrator tends to take the viewpoint of the character he most frequently pronominalises or ellipts and to take a more objective or neutral stance towards those referred to with noun phrases. In cases where the speaker pronominalises or ellipts two different characters, he would seem to be treating both as 'equal' on the dimensions of new/old information, plot centrality and empathy. This may be the case in the following:

Alternation of pronouns referring to different characters.

NES child: Bits of things that Donald Duck did it shows. Today he - well one day he was going fishing and the fish was pulling him when he was going fishing with the fish. And he crashed right in the pole. And then all these nephews came and they got him real mad and he turns

> into a vampire dracula and he scares them away. And then they come back and lay, they turn, they put a white sheet over him, they turn him into a ghost and they scare him away. And he's running. He goes into the water. He is running under water. And that's it.

Table 3 also shows that NES children use more referential noun phrases than ES children. Clancy suggests (1980: 140-42) that "If we imagine the speaker as having his own inner 'dial' set in an inexplicit form of reference we can conceptualise his use of noun phrase reference as a response to various listener-oriented constraints". She concludes that one "can use the percentage of nominal reference as an index of speakers' response to listeners' needs in a particular environment". If one accepts this view one can say that NES children were more listener oriented, or that they control the use of pronominal reference less well. Another explanation for the more frequent use of nominal referencing could be a stronger tendency to plan locally, that is on clause rather than on discourse or global level. This would imply more frequent fresh starts, that is not taking account of what has gone before, and the greater use of the more explicit noun phrases (See Karmiloff-Smith, 1983, 22: 11-13) in the earlier stages of narrative development.

Table 4: First Mention of Identity in Subject Position

	Total References	Total 1st Mention		1st Mention NP		1st Mention P	
	n	f	%	f	%	f	%
Total group	723	174	24	138	70	36	8
NES	341	85	25	62	61	23	12
ES	382	89	23	76	80	13	5

Table 5: First Mentions of Identity in any Position: Indefinite Noun Phrase and Proper Noun

	Total 1st Mention NP	Indefinite NP		Proper Noun	
	n	f	%	f	%
Total group	157	66	42	21	13
NES	72	38	53	5	7
ES	85	28	33	16	19

First Mention of an Entity

As evidenced by the data in Tables 4 and 5 the majority of first mentions of identities were noun phrases. The ES children used a greater proportion of these compared with the NES children. The situation is reversed in the case of pronouns (The personal pronoun 'I' was not counted). It appears that at first mention the ES children were semantically more informative. However, the NES children used more indefinite noun phrases thereby clearly indicating the new status of an entity. However, for both groups categorising the entity, e.g. man, woman, child, seemed more important than signalling 'newness'.

These findings are interesting in view of the fact that

> In many of the world's languages, probably in most, the subject of declarative clauses cannot be representative-indefinite. In other words, the subject position in the sentence is one in which 'new information' cannot be introduced. In order to violate this 'categorical' constraint, the speaker must resort to a special, marked sentence type, the 'existential-presentative' construction (Givón 1979: 26-27).

For example,

NES child: There was a man walking past.

According to Givón the text frequency of indefinite subjects of main-declarative-affirmative-active sentences is extremely low, about 10 percent against 90 percent definite. This is the proportion observed in the narratives of both groups.

Further, NES children used proportionally fewer proper names at first mention, which shows that they were less likely to take the film viewer's point of view, that is, take for granted that their audience was familiar with the plot of the television show and more accustomed to operating across boundaries of culturally-shared information. Proper names were not used to introduce new identities in the other types of narratives.

Variety and change of characters

The data in Tables 6 and 7 indicate that the NES children introduced a greater variety of characters into their narratives. Nominal reference was used for these nearly as much as pronominal reference by both groups. The likely average rate of change was greater in the case of the NES children. Total group mean percent = 26; NES mean percent = 30; ES mean percent = 23).

Table 6: Distribution of Different References

	No. of Clauses	Different References	No. of References	Different References	
	n	Mean percent	n	f	%
Total group	873	29	723	96	13
NES	415	32	341	98	28
ES	458	26	382	98	25

Table 7: Distribution of Different References within the Reference Category

	Clause	Noun Phrase		Pronoun		Ellipsis	
	n	f	Mean percent	f	Mean percent	f	Mean percent
Total group	873	127	19	147	20	61	10
NES	415	68	23	70	21	34	13
ES	458	59	15	77	18	27	06

On the one hand, it can be said that the introduction of each new entity reduces the cohesiveness of a narrative. But, on the other hand, subsequent reference to these entities enhances its cohesiveness. One could argue that the number of different characters and the frequency of character changes add to the complexity of a text rendering it more difficult for the speaker to organise the tracing of identities and for the listener to

track their individual histories. If a number of characters is accepted as an index of complexity then, on this dimension, the NES children's stories were more complex. One may ask whether this is a by-product of bilingualism.

Referencing in adjacent clauses

Another way of looking at the use of referential forms is to segment texts into adjacent or immediately consecutive clauses and see what type of patterns predominate. The coreferential nominal and pronominal pairs one can expect are:

1. N + N
2. N - N
3. N + P
4. N - P
5. P + N
6. P - N
7. P + P
8. P - N

Overall ES children were more likely to use these conferential pairs than NES children. Both groups used all eight combinations, but only four of the pairs with some frequency. (Refer to Table 8)

Table 8: Most Frequent Conferential Sequences in Adjacent Clauses

	Clause		N + P		P - N		P + P		P - P	
	n	Mean percent	n	Mean percent	n	Mean percent	n	Mean percent	n	Mean percent
Total group	873	55	55	07	56	07	151	14	135	12
NES	415	52	25	07	22	05	62	09	50	07
ES	458	57	30	06	24	09	89	18	85	17

P + P was the most popular adjacency clause sequence, but the ES children were twice as likely to utter these as the NES children. Further the hierarchical order of their occurrence is not identical across the two groups, (see Table 9).

Table 9: Hierarchical Order of the Most Frequent Conferential Pairs

Total group	NES	ES
1. P + P	1. P + P	1. P + P
2. P - P	(2. P - P	2. P - P
3. P - N	(2. N + P	3. P - N
4. N + P	3. P - N	4. N + P

A pronoun with a pronoun or noun antecedent also formed the most frequently occurring pairs in non-adjacent clauses (Refer to Table 10).

Table 10: Rank Order of Referential Pairs Irrespective of Distance

NES Pairs n = 192			ES Pairs n = 171		
Reference-Antecedent	f	%	Reference-Antecedent	f	%
P - P	66	34	P - P	72	42
P - N	43	22	P - N	38	22
N - N	21	11	N - N	20	12
N - P	18	9	E - P	18	10
E - P	13	7	N - P	9	5
E - N	10	5	P - E	5	3
N - E	8	4	E - E	4	2
E - E	3	2	N - E	2	1

The domination of attenuated pairs should not come as a surprise, nor the occurrence of nominal or explicit reference preceding a pronominal or attenuated form. The previous discussion on 'givenness' should explain the popularity of these pairs.

It might be worth pointing out that the children introduced on the average 12 characters in their combined stories, the average length of which was 50 clauses. So they had the opportunity of referring to each character in subject position on the average approximately four times. In three of four cases, they would have been referring to already established characters. For these pronominal or attenuated referencing would have been quite appropriate. On the average the ES children used more of this type than

the NES children. This is particularly noticeable with attenuated-attenuated sequences. The ES children used this combination with a likely prevalence double that of the NES children. The greater use of pronouns in immediately consecutive clauses seem to indicate that ES children told their stories in a series of at least two related actions, related because they had conferential subjects. So the manner in which they treated preserved subjects had a more pronounced bias towards the attenuated or pronominal form. This could be interpreted as ES children judging hearers more knowledgeable than NES children or being less concerned with hearers' needs for explicitness.

New - 'this'

Among the referential forms observed 'this' and 'these' deserve special attention because they play a double role. Depending on the context and stress, they refer either to given or new information. To put it another way they can be used as definite or indefinite determiners. Wald (1983: 93) calls the latter 'new - this' as there is no record of its use before the 1930s. Other terms used by linguists are 'introductory - this' or 'indefinite - this'.

Here we have a striking development of the determiner system in English which has enjoyed phenomenal geographic expansion. 'New -this' is socially constrained. Wald states that "It is informally observed that 'new - this' is also more common among children and adolescents than among adults. Whether this is a generational manifestation of a change in progress or simply a reflection of a stable age-grading phenomenon, perhaps associated with elaboration of styles in approaching adulthood, remains unclear" (1983: 94). Whether age related or not 'new - this' is now a way of introducing a new entity into oral discourse.

It seems then that by observing the distribution of 'new - this' one could gain some insight into the children's awareness of current language use. In other words one could see to what extent they were adopting some features of mainstream adolescent English, in particular, with respect to the use of determiners.

Table 11: Distribution of 'new - this'

	f	Mean percent
Total group	50	06
NES	20	05
ES	30	07

Table 11 indicates that the children made some use of this new method of referring to new information. The ES children were more likely to use it, but the difference between the two groups is not great.

'New - this' - pronoun - ellipsis

NES child: Now these boys were playing at the school, and they had matches and were playing with the matches.

'New - this' - pronoun - noun phrase (part of entity)

ES child: There is this man. He had an accident, all his shoulder was cut.

It appears then that the NES children are somewhat less 'modern' or to put it another way, lag slightly behind mainstream adolescent usage.

Distance and character change in referencing

Another way of checking speaker awareness of hearer needs might be to measure distance and character change in referential use. By distance is meant the number of clauses separating two mentions of the same subject and by character change the number of references to other subjects which occur between two mentions. Both distance and character change add to the

hearers' cognitive load. Distance represents lapse of time so makes demands on memory and character change involves keeping more than one entity simultaneously in the focus of consciousness. We have already seen that NES children were more hearer-oriented than ES children in mitigating character change through the more frequent use of explicit referencing. The shorter distance between conferential subjects underpins this view (NES mean distance = 1.22 clauses, ES mean distance = 1.57 clauses. There were few digressions, that is, clauses not involving any of the characters. Their density was almost identical (NES mean percent = 18, ES mean percent = 19).

Table 12: Distance in Clauses between Referential Subjects

Referential Subjects	Clauses									
	1		2-3		4-5		6-10		10+	
	n	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Total	723	283	39	110	15	35	5	47	7	8	1
NES	341	144	42	44	13	21	6	16	5	2	1
ES	382	139	36	66	17	14	4	31	8	6	2

NB: Percentages do not necessarily sum to 100 because not all referential subjects have antecedents.

Table 12 gives a more detailed picture. It shows that for both groups a greater percent of referential subjects were in the clause immediately following the previous mention. However, compared with the NES children, the ES children uttered fewer referential subject pairs in adjacent clauses and more such pairs at a distance of two to ten clauses. There were two instances in the NES children's group where more than ten clauses elapsed. The maximum number of intervening clauses allowed to elapse by a NES child was 33 and by an ES child 24.

On the whole it can be said that both groups kept co-referential items fairly close. The NES children were more inclined to do so thereby lessening the listener's processing task.

In other respects the two groups preserved subjects in a rather similar way. They uttered a similar average percent of unbroken identity chains (NES mean percent = 21, ES mean percent = 20), sequences longer than two contiguous mentions (NES mean percent = 6, ES mean percent = 8), and switch references (NES mean percent = 32, ES mean percent = 31). The average for the longest identity change was (NES = 12.25, ES = 13.25). But for switch referencing the above tend to lighten the hearer's task of comprehension by reducing the frequency of character changes. The maintenance of subject constancy in this way may, however, be due to the story line or temporal sequence of events rather than concern for the hearer.

Connectives

English has a variety of linguistic means for making the connection between clauses explicitly to fill the gap between clauses or mark the boundary between them. Connectives help the listener to track relations between events while providing extra planning time for the speaker, while gap fillers and boundary markers also lighten the planning/processing task by diluting information density. At the same time, they help to maintain the impression of fluency. Linking devices are speaker options. Although they are not essential for the intelligibility of a text their very existence and variety is significant.

There are two overlapping systems expressing relations between clauses. One is the grammatical system of subordination and co-ordination. The other is the semantic system connecting clauses 'logically' to their context. There are four principal types of such conjunctions in English: additive (e.g. and, or), adversative (e.g. but, yet), causal (e.g. so, because), and temporal (e.g. then, next day). As the examples show they can be adverbs, prepositional expressions and conjunctions (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 238-239).

The children only used additive 'and', temporal 'then' and their combination 'and then' with any frequency. Sixty-seven percent of the children's clauses were introduced by 'and'. This is not surprising as these are the characteristic connectives of oral language. For example, they played an important role in the stories of primary school children discussed by Martin (1983).

Additive 'and'

> NES child: It was in David Street and I was in a car. And there is this lady and she was driving with this man and a baby. And it was only eight months. And this car, he forgot to strap up. And she missed it. And she got all her teeth knocked out. And the baby in the hospital was all right and the husband broke his arm.

Studying the data in Table 13 reveals that the NES children were more likely to use 'and', but otherwise their use of connectives was quite close to that of the ES children. There was a difference, however, in the variety of 'other' connectives in that NES children use a wider range. Seventy-six percent of the connectives used by the NES children were different compared with 64 percent of the ES children's.

The following is a selection of the 'logical' connective types used by the children. They have been categorised according to Martin (1983).

> Additive: and, or;
> Temporal: when, after (that), before, while, now;
> Consequential: but (concessive), if (conditional), so, because (causal).

The latter also appeared in combinations (so when, but then).

Table 13: Distribution of Connectives per Clause

	and		and then		then		other		type	
	f	mean percent	f	mean percent	f	mean percent	f	mean percent	f	mean
Total group	304	43	34	03	21	02	129	12	90	.09
NES	170	49	11	02	14	03	62	11	47	.09
ES	134	38	23	04	7	02	67	12	43	.08

To sum up, the data indicate that NES children expressed a greater variety of logical and structural relations. Their speech was also conjunctively more cohesive. This was achieved by using the simplest conjunction 'and' which according to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 233) can be and is used cohesively to link one sentence to another, and not only by children.

Of course the type of connectives used also tells us something about the organisation of the stories. The prominent use of the additive 'and' and the temporal 'and then' and 'then' indicate that the stories were told in the sequence of events. This is developmentally the simplest way of telling a story (Clark 1973). But as logical relations in a narrative are not necessarily explicitly stated (see, for example, Tierney et al. 1979; Martin 1983; Brown and Yule 1983), a more extended analysis is required to establish and compare the prevalent narrative event sequencing in the children's stories.

Conclusion

The aim of the conclusion is to answer the question whether a non-English speaking environment coupled with bilingualism, even if incipient, influences children's oral language. It must be remembered that the home environment of 'bilingual' children usually exposes them to two languages: (1) a language other than English spoken as the mother tongue, and (2) an interlanguage form of English. It can be assumed that the former is a 'systematic' shared language system, the latter apparently 'unsystematic' and only partly shared. Further, the school language is not identical with the 'systematic' home language. Conversely ES children have only one home language, but it is not 'systematic' and identical with or at least a variant of the school language.

At this stage the question that has been posed can only be answered very tentatively. At best one can point to certain trends that may be

worth investigating further. Therefore what follows should be understood as purely tentative and not as indubitably proven. If this is accepted, it will permit a more direct, less cluttered style of reporting, free of the constant repetition of qualifying phrases.

Previous research has shown that NES children are in an intermediate position between parents and mates with respect to producing morpho-syntactically and pragmatically well formed replies. This applies to the first clause of their answer or subsequent longer stretches of text.

When telling stories the NES and ES children's language use was in many respects quite similar. They were almost equally talkative, their subject entities mostly referred to animate beings. Overall the density of their referential forms was very similar, they used more pronominal than nominal referencing, and they mostly connected their clauses with additive 'and'.

The two groups, however, differed in detail. The NES children made greater use of the nominal referential form. In this way they were more informative and so hearer oriented. Greater sensitivity to other people's needs is supposed to be characteristic of bilinguals. (Findling 1972; Rado 1976; Foster, Rado and Rowley 1980). The NES children introduced more characters into their stories and effected character changes more frequently. This implies that their stories were more complex. In contrast the ES children used more pronominal referencing thereby relying more on the hearer's ability to keep entities in the focus of consciousness, in other words, they expected more from the hearer. But through pronominal reference they made their text more cohesive. They showed a greater sense for contemporary adolescent usage through their use of 'new - this'. One may speculate that this was due to greater exposure to the vernacular pattern of Australian English.

Finally, although there was little difference generally in the use of connectives, the NES children used 'and' more frequently. Of course the use of 'and' is ambiguous as it can simultaneously play an additive as well as a filler role. One cannot simply say, therefore, that the NES children's narratives were more cohesive on this measure.

What the investigation of NES children's language has shown so far is that a bilingual environment and actual or incipient bilingualism have both negative and positive aspects. They can create some morphosyntactically or pragmatically based problems in language use, but they can also heighten linguistic awareness in that 'bilinguals' may monitor hearer needs more closely and, therefore, through more frequent nominalisation make their topics clearer. This statement is based on the contention that topics are usually associated with a noun phrase in a sentence which tends to be the subject. If this is the case character and topic coincide (Wald 1983: 104).

The practical implications are as follows:

(a) Bilingual children may need more help in learning to use standard morphosyntactic forms consistently and in attaching the appropriate meaning to lexical items and speech acts in different contexts. If child language is influenced by parent language, then an analysis of parent speech might be informative for planning a language program. Further thought should be given to considering the family as the teaching unit. If parents are encouraged to use their mother tongue in the home, the exposure to interlanguage would be lessened and the children would not have to reject some formal aspects of their parents' English. But effective ethnic language use in the home requires some formal study of the language by the children.

(b) If bilingual children are more hearer-oriented and can handle more complex narratives, monolingual children should have the opportunity to learn a second language and so share this benefit.

(c) It seems that language development in Australia today should not be seen in monolingual terms. Any language program should be based on a bilingual perspective, that is, taking into consideration both English and the home language. This is not an unrealistic suggestion. An increasing number of primary schools in Victoria is moving in that direction.

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